Fact sheet 1.1 Measuring growth

Learning aim A1 Principles and patterns of development

How development is measured

The rate at which children grow and develop can vary significantly from their peers. A range of factors can affect growth and development, including a child's environment and their genetics.

Developmental norms or milestones are the things that professionals measure to assess whether children have acquired the necessary skills for their age/stage of development. These milestones have been defined and considered as normative achievements. However, there is variance within these norms as children develop at different rates but always go through the same sequence or stages of development.

From birth to two years a child's development is measured in a number of ways using a centile chart. A baby's weight, length and head circumference are recorded on these charts.

Figure 1.1 Example of centile charts

As a child grows and starts nursery, professionals utilise other resources to measure children's development; however, these methods tend to explore children's skills and abilities. Professionals in early years practice use the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) framework. This is a statutory document which provides standards that schools and childcare providers must meet for children from birth to five years. There are two frameworks, one for childminders and one for group and school-based providers. This framework requires providers to meet specific standards to ensure children thrive, are kept healthy and safe, and have the knowledge and skills ready to start school.

Alongside the EYFS framework is Development Matters. This document is non-statutory but provides excellent guidance and examples for professionals working in early years settings to understand the features of effective practice and teaching and learning. These documents will be referred to throughout the course and will provide explanations of what children should be learning at different ages and to support and promote children's development with activities and resources.

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